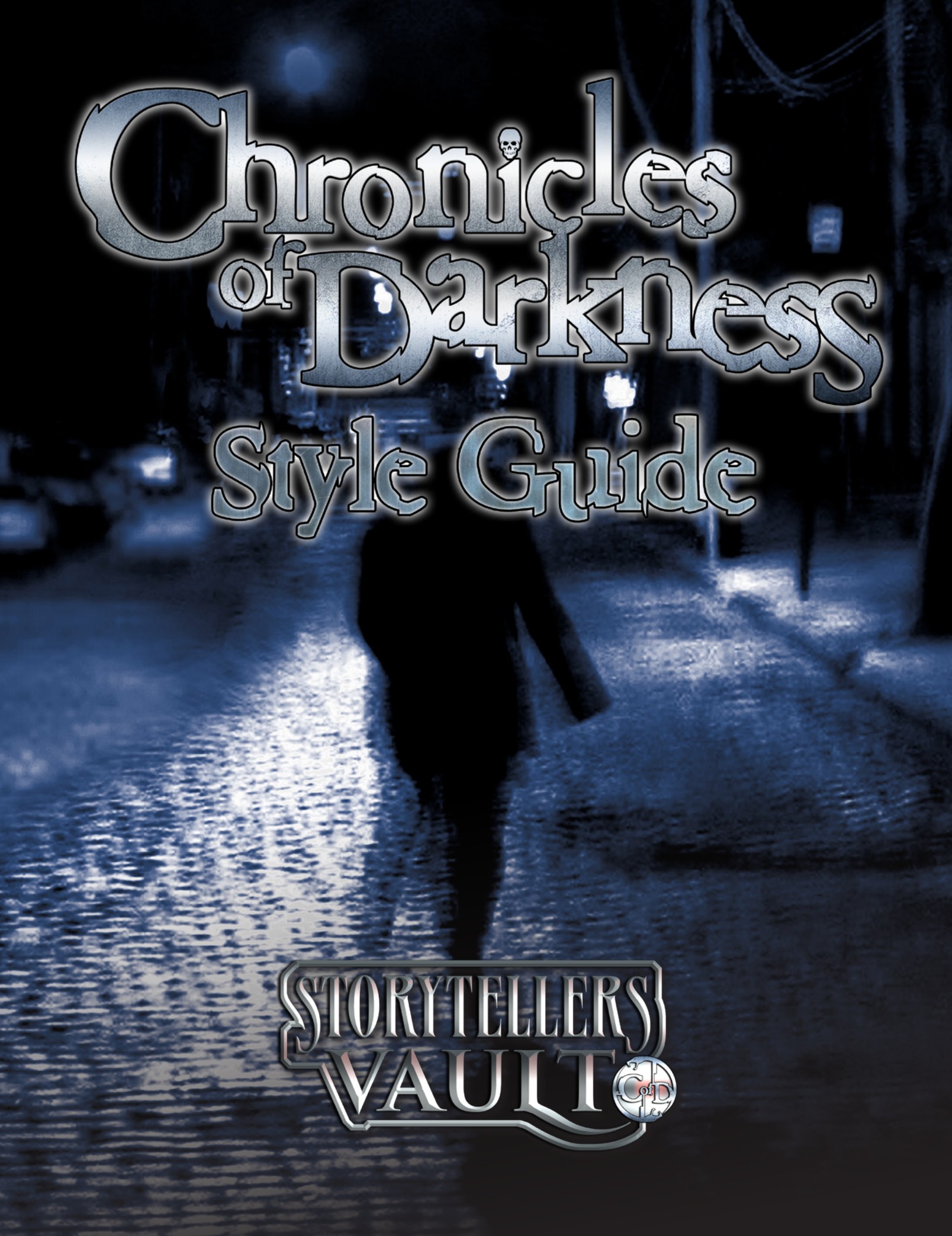
Chronicles of Darkness
Style Guide
STORYTELLERS VAULT

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Chronicles of Darkness

Style Guide

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Chronicles of Darkness Style Guide

Welcome to the Chronicles of Darkness Storytellers Vault Style Guide. The contents of this guide will help you create new material for the horror roleplaying game Chronicles of Darkness, as well as the numerous game lines that expand on playing particular monsters.

You may be completely new to creating material for other readers to use and enjoy, or perhaps you are an established writer; whatever your level of experience, this guide will aid you in writing for the Chronicles of Darkness. In these pages, you'll find a brief overview of each of the editions that the game lines have gone through.

Whether you want to give a strange or eerie locale the treatment you think it deserves, create new bloodlines, lodges, or legacies for player characters, or detail nightmarish antagonists and unnerving characters for Storytellers to populate their chronicles with, this guide serves as a useful starting point.

Dwellers in Darkness

The core focus of the Chronicles of Darkness is on the human experience in a world of horror, but it isn't just one setting — it's many. Each of these additional games focuses on playing a specific kind of monster dwelling in the shadows of the world. Vampire: The Requiem, Werewolf: the Forsaken, Mage: The Awakening, Promethean: The Created, Changeling: The Lost, Hunter: The Vigil, Geist: The Sin-Eaters, Mummy: The Curse, Demon: The Descent, and Beast: The Primordial all present new protagonists, threats, and stories to tell in the Chronicles of Darkness.

Crucially, while each line features unique rules and advice suited to its particular brand of monstrous characters, all of the games in the Chronicles of Darkness share an underlying set of core rules. As a result, it's possible to import elements of one game into another, or to weave

stories that touch on several of the different kinds of protagonist and antagonist across various lines. The setting of each game line stands independently of the others, but it's relatively easy to bring them together if so desired.

Changing Editions

Most of the Chronicles of Darkness lines have now gone through two editions, each of which is supported in this guide. The progress from one edition to the next does not involve the advancement of any kind of metaplot or in-setting story, but some lines underwent significant changes to their setting or to key underlying concepts. If you're familiar with one edition but want to create content for the other, don't assume that the rules or concepts will have remained the same.

The Chronicles of Darkness introduced a number of mechanical changes to its core rule set that affect all of the game lines' second editions. As well as adjustments across various elements of the game such as the combat rules, and the introduction of new subsystems such as social maneuvering, the most significant changes are the use of Beats and Conditions. If yoazu're writing content for any of the second editions of these games, it's important to familiarize yourself with these concepts and how they incentivize and shape player behavior.

Supplementary Material

A number of 'blue book' supplements have been published across both editions of the core rule set, detailing a plethora of new areas of horror and storytelling under titles such as Mirrors, Second Sight, Skinchangers, Tales from the 13th Precinct, Urban Legends, and plenty more besides. You are free to create new material compatible with the systems and settings from these books, such as an adventure set in the 13th Precinct or a new system of minor magic for practitioners using Second Sight.

The God-Machine Chronicle

The **God-Machine Chronicle** introduces an underlying, sinister presence for Chronicles of Darkness stories that focus on playing as mortals. These are tales of normal human beings trying to survive in the face of a world of horror, experiencing the influence of something vast and monstrously inhuman — the God-Machine.

The **God-Machine Chronicle** focuses on the human experience, pitting mortal characters against the callous machinations of the eldritch God-Machine and exploring how they struggle in the face of such alien horror. People know there is something subtly wrong in the world, but ignore it for as long as they can, preferring the comforting bliss of self-deception rather than facing the truth. Witnessing the horror of the God-Machine's presence leads to alienation and isolation from a society that willingly blinds itself to such, and so characters come together out of mutual support or loathing, united by their exposure to horror. It's a game about breaking points, willpower, and identity.

The focus of the Chronicle's threat comes through the God-Machine itself—a vast, blind leviathan that lingers just beyond perception. The God-Machine's presence is felt in strange cults, the warped architecture of rooms that shouldn't fit in the house, a basement of gears oiled with blood, and glitches in reality. It cannot be reasoned with, appealed to, or appeased, and its interactions with humanity treat them only as resources to be exploited or threats to be exterminated. Immense and inscrutable, the God-Machine's reach extends across the world and throughout history.

The scope of the God-Machine means that it is a lingering, background threat — always present, but not not necessarily front and center in every story. The characters will face the servants of the Machine — including terrifying angels — or the phenomena it has uncaringly inflicted on the

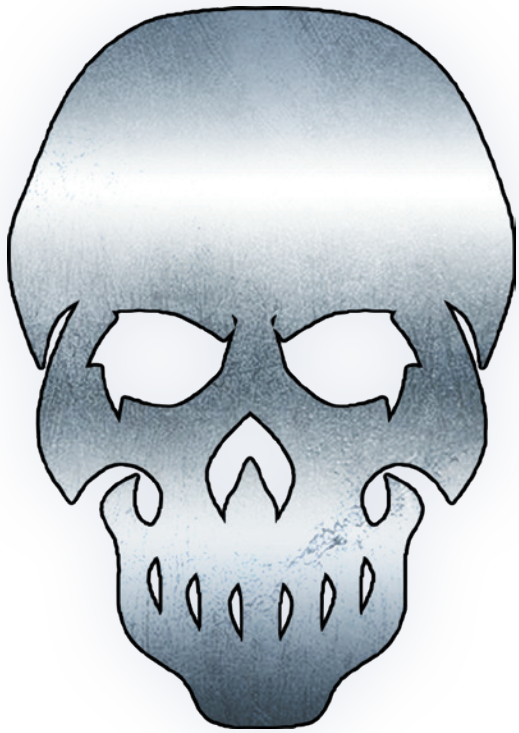
world, but they can't go and fight the God-Machine itself as a singular being. The God-Machine Chronicle also has space for stories that avoid the God-Machine entirely, instead drawing human characters into contact with other denizens of the shadows.

Themes: The individual facing off against the juggernaut of faceless bureaucracy, hidden systems and conspiracies, peeling back the facade of normalcy and finding horror just beneath it.

Setting Advice: Settings and sourcebooks for the God-Machine Chronicle should usually focus on personal and street-level horror; the protagonists are human beings, dealing with monstrous forces that they are likely unprepared for. That doesn't mean these stories have to focus on a sense of despair or an inevitable triumph of the God-Machine; characters can and should be capable of throwing grit in the gears and derailing its schemes. Focus on subtle horror that slowly blooms into ghastly realization, on conspiracies and paranoia, and on the cost that dealing with the shadows extracts on the human characters of the game.

Influences: The Crow, Demo, The Exorcist, Fell, Gone Girl, The Terminator, True Detective.

Game Design Advice: The God-Machine Chronicle uses the game's second edition rules. Remember that human characters have much more limited capabilities than the monstrous antagonists of other game lines, and even relatively minor supernatural antagonists can pose a significant threat to a group of normal humans.



Vampire: the Requiem

Themes & Inspirations

Vampire: the Requiem is a game of gothic horror; the default player characters are vampires who must struggle with their craving for blood, the beast within them, and their isolation from humanity The obvious inspiration is the heavyweight of the genre, Bram Stoker's Dracula, along with other significant titles such as Carmilla, and the plethora of vampire fiction that has exploded onto the scene in recent decades. The world in which these vampires dwell is one of deep shadows, baroque cities, and hungrier things yet that wait in the darkness to prey on the mistakes of the Kindred.

A major focus in Vampire is on personal horror — the internal struggles between the vampire's fading humanity and the ravenous urges of the Beast. A vampire is a parasite and a predator, forced to prey on her former peers simply to survive — and armed with a panoply of dark powers that make it ever-so-easy to toy with mortals, to stop thinking of them as peers and instead just as a herd from which she can draw sustenance. What crimes will a vampire commit just to wake to another night? What transgressions is a vampire willing to commit to get ahead of her rivals? The covenants in Vampire are, therefore, founded not on notions of worldwide plots but, instead, on the basis of how they present the different ways that Kindred grapple with giving meaning and purpose to their nightly existence.

Vampire is often a game about scheming, manipulation, and politics; vampires, caught in an endless parade of blood-soaked nights, maneuver and clash with each other to sate their hungers, to pursue their goals, or simply to entertain themselves and hold back the ennui of immortality. They compete over blood, power, and the supremacy of their philosophies. Many chronicles will feature clever attempts to frame, blackmail, or betray characters; vampires often use pawns and catspaws rather than direct confrontation; and violence, when it happens, is usually sudden, brutal, and shocking.

Some suggested media inspiration for both editions of Vampire includes the aforementioned *Dracula and Carmilla, the film Near Dark, the book and movie versions of The Hunger, and The Lost Boys.*

Vampire: the Requiem First Edition

The First Edition of **Vampire: The Requiem** presents an open approach where Storytellers are encouraged to build their game from the pieces on offer. The game assumes a local, focused, street-level view; rather than grand conspiracies or occult histories, it looks closely at the personal horror of being a blood-drinking monster among the human herd.

The setting of Vampire draws from gothic literature; it is our world seen through the looking glass darkly, a place of violence, corruption, and medieval imagery. The streets are dangerous, the rich jealous and fearful, and authority is abused. It's hard for people to look beyond the immediacy of their situation. The backdrop is of crumbling buildings, faded grandeur, and grubby immorality.

Within this setting, vampires are a divided community. Theirs is a timeless curse, but they have no overarching or single explanation or understanding for it. Instead, a profusion of interpretations and ideologies arise; the Covenants carve vampiric society up among themselves in a struggle for power. The fallible memory of elder Kindred and the isolated nature of vampires draws the focus onto the nightly existence of individuals and coteries.

In the First Edition of the game, the assumed viewpoint is a narrow one, limited to a particular city or locale and the Kindred who dwell there. Cities are isolated bastions; the Covenants may compete for control within one, but few stories reach farther abroad. The

night is dark and full of shadows, and even vampires know only a little of what lies in the gloom.

Themes: A Beast I am, lest a Beast I become, the horror of becoming a predator, hidden sins and ugly vices, personal conspiracies and the struggle for power, alienation and isolation.

Setting Advice: Requiem has a 'toolbox' approach which provides both opportunities and obstacles for a writer. Content intended to be dropped into a variety of Chronicles has to take account of the fact that the political and social set-up can vary wildly between tables; one group might play in a city where the Invictus rule with the support of the Lancea Sanctum in an organized, stifling pyramid of power, but another might see a city torn apart by feuding factions with no meaningful community between them. As there is no overarching, global Kindred culture, the game offers a lot of freedom on how its vampires can be depicted. Requiem content should focus on its characters, particularly their social or political machinations, and how these might entangle or lure the player characters into events.

Influences: Nosferatu, Shadow of the Vampire, Interview with the Vampire, Beethoven, Mozart, the Sex Pistols, Black Flag, Sisters of Mercy, This Mortal Coil, Faith and the Muse, Switchblade Symphony, Bauhaus

Game Design Advice: In First Edition, vampires are considerably more powerful than humans, but their capabilities are still relatively constrained and modest. Internal balance is a meaningful consideration when creating new Disciplines and the like; new Bloodlines offer freedom to explore wilder ideas. The overall focus is very personal and often subtle, with vampires often working through influence rather than crazy or extravagant powers.

Vampire: the Requiem Second Edition

The Second Edition of Vampire: The Requiem keeps the core of Vampire's personal horror and flexible presentation of options for the Storyteller to use, but shakes it up with a renewed emphasis on the vampire as a monster and on visceral drama. It's about sex and murder, power and wild defiance, thrilling action and nail-biting paranoia.

This edition pushes the focus onto what each individual vampire is willing to do to survive the night, how they'll live with themselves for their crimes, and what dark drives could give them the strength to survive this damnation. It looks at the vampire's connection to humanity, and how they struggle to keep hold of it even as it slips away. It's still personal horror, but it's pitched in terms of guilt, hunger, and lies, rather than as a sense of existential angst.

The passage of the ages plays a greater role in Second Edition chronicles. Most Chronicles still play out through the modern nights, but the fog of ages that clouded vampiric records in First Edition no longer exists; stories often draw on the unique history of the region or city, tying the current situation for vampires into what has gone before. Rather than being anachronistic relics, elders swiftly adapt to new changes; the Kindred struggle with the clash between old and new.

Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition was previously published as Blood and Smoke: The Strix Chronicle, and it features the Strix Chronicle. This is a suggested chronicle setting wherein the terrifying Strix are abroad, monstrous shadow-owls and grisly possessed corpses of folklore made disturbingly real, and who now pursue the Kindred. The Strix Chronicle provides the set-up for a game wherein hunters become hunted, with an alien threat that can attack vampire society from within or without and tear the whole thing down in an orgy of blood and paranoia.

Themes: Requiem and masquerade, the old and the new, piety and blasphemy, sex and murder.

Setting Advice: Second Edition keeps the 'toolbox' approach and opens it up further; plenty of example locations show how vampire society can wildly vary from place to place. The setting is sharper, often weirder, and draws some sharper distinctions between the different Clans. Storytellers are encouraged to be flexible and inventive with how they depict the Covenants in their game.

The Strix are a powerful setting element in this edition; vampires' understanding of the world is no longer clouded by the fog of ages or a myopic focus on immediate, street-level issues, but the night remains a

dangerous place to go astray, and the Strix are part of the reason why. These vampiric entities are powerful antagonists in their own right, but they work well as part of a story about history and the occult mysteries of Kindred origins.

Influences: Already Dead, The Hunger, Night Junkies, Katja from the Punk Band, The Big Sleep, Go.

Game Design Advice: Vampires in Second Edition are considerably more potent, with Disciplines offering a serious boost in their impact on the game. Touchstones are a new and significant part of the Humanity system, emphasizing human connections. The Beat system helps drive vampires towards dangerous or conflicting situations by offering a reward for risk and loss. New content that hooks onto these mechanical levers can help play up the feel of vampires driven by dark urges and powerful ambitions.

Second Edition has a flexible approach to implementing vampires' traditional and folkloric weaknesses and aspects. Don't assume that the player characters will be unable to act during the day; low Blood Potency and high Humanity Kindred can get away with limited activity. Clan Banes don't kick in until a vampire has first dropped to Humanity 6, but vampires can also take on additional thematic Banes to firm up their degeneration against similar acts.

WEREWOLF: THE FORSAKEN

THEMES & INSPIRATIONS

Werewolf: the Forsaken fuses the raw violence present in much werewolf media with a heavy dose of occult paranoia and shamanic transgression, creating a game of savage horror. In both editions, Werewolf is about changing forms and constant fury, about dividing lines and the price that has to be paid for crossing them. It's also a game about mysticism and the occult but, far from presenting these as ephemeral or intangible notions, they're just as brutal and real as everything else. It depicts a monstrous otherworld, the Shadow, wherein ghastly spirits caper and cavort, separated from the real world by only a scarred Gauntlet that's as fragile and as easily torn away as skin.

Werewolf is a game of body horror. Use metaphors of flesh, blood and bone when describing the nightmare environs, dark hunting grounds, and twisted shapeshifters who prowl the night; describe things in terms of the pursuit, the hunt, and the bringing down of the prey. In Werewolf, the flesh is no longer a reliable constant. It's a malleable, quicksilver thing, a rebellious breeding ground for horrors who can hide beneath lying skin. Viscera, blood, and gore accompany the fury of the Uratha; cancerous mutation and violation of the human form are the tools of their antagonists and enemies.

Often seen as one of the most combat-focused of the Chronicles of Darkness games, Werewolf lends itself to stories focusing on violence, anger, and bloodshed. Even the least of the Uratha can take the form of a towering hybrid monstrosity, capable of hewing through victims like a scythe through wheat. Driven by territorial instincts and the urge to hunt, werewolves' lives are defined by conflict, whether with each other or with the horrors slithering through the Gauntlet. The game doesn't necessitate violence as the first or only response to problems, but the tension of repressed fury should always be there, ready to burst out into a display of carnage.

Werewolf: the Forsaken draws on a wide range of sources for its inspiration, with plenty of werewolf media such as An American Werewolf in London, Ginger Snaps, or Dog Soldiers. The game supplements the ravening werewolf of the movies with strong themes of gang violence and territoriality; as such, any films or series about gangs and crime can offer some ideas for how werewolf packs form and deal with each other. For the body horror and shamanic transgression elements, there's a dizzying array of media to draw inspiration from, from anything involving H. R. Giger to the spiraling horror of Junji Ito's Uzumaki. The Upside-Down from Stranger Things offers one take on how a particularly desolate or warped area of the Shadow might appear.

WEREWOLF: THE FORSAKEN FIRST EDITION

Werewolf: The Forsaken First Edition is a game of savage fury that draws a line between the pack and the world. It's a game about that dividing line, and how the werewolves who call themselves Forsaken patrol it against any who would challenge them. As such, First Edition is very much a game about territory. It pitches the spirit world of the Shadow as a nightmarish realm that the Forsaken must hold back, even as rival werewolves and ghastly horrors of the Flesh press at their territory's boundaries in the real world. In First Edition, the pressure on werewolves never lets up.

The hunt, both as predator and prey, is a key element of the setting. Forsaken actively seek out threats and take them down, even as they defend against foes who want to see them fall and their terri-

tory despoiled. Of the various lines of the Chronicles of Darkness, this one has a very strong and varied roster of monstrous antagonists, with a particular focus on body horror in enemies such as the Claimed and the Hosts.

First Edition establishes a strong, mythic history that underpins the Forsaken existence, communicated through an oral tradition. Many a tale begins with the line 'this story is true', signaling that the facts of what really happened are less important than the lesson, as recited to the listener, imparts for the now.

Despite focusing on the brutal physicality of werewolves, Forsaken remains a game with a strong spiritual bent. Strange mysteries are common when exploring the eerie Shadow and dealing with its mad denizens, but the focus on these encounters remains focused on the personal. Werewolves deal in the shamanic entanglements of regional spirit courts and the dark consequences of local history, rather than touching on cosmic mysteries or grand magics.

Themes: Hunt or be hunted, savage fury, uncontrolled rage, dark tension, paranoia, body horror, strange mysteries.

Setting Advice: First Edition Werewolf: The Forsaken is very much a game of 'us vs. them', where 'them' is anyone outside the pack. Packs of characters are tightly bound together, and this drives a lot of the way Forsaken society works. Dealings with other packs are often fraught with tension. Tribes are not top-down organizations that command the structure of Forsaken society; they're a fellowship that can sometimes bridge the gap between different packs.

Pushing on the themes of territory and paranoia can really make the setting sing. Friends, family, and turf give compelling reasons for Forsaken to get involved, protecting what they care about. Equally, antagonists often go after those very same things, subverting or corrupting them. Both push werewolves towards the fury of Death Rage; this loss of control is one of the defining aspects of Forsaken existence. The terror of Werewolf: The Forsaken is never knowing whether a Host now stares out from behind a loved one's eyes, or coming to one's senses soaked in blood with no memory of what just happened.

Don't go overboard with First Tongue, the language of the Shadow. It adds a great deal with the feel and tone of the game, but overuse in text can make material hard for a reader to penetrate. For writers wanting to add new First Tongue terms, the language is based on ancient Sumerian; lexicons can be found online. After constructing the desired word or name, it is then run backwards through 'Grimm's Law', then further tweaked until the resulting word has a satisfying sound and feel.

Influences: Murcheston: The Wolf's Tale, Moon Dance, The Howling, The Wolf Man, Wolf, Holst's Mars, Bringer of War, Mussorgsky's Night on Bald Mountain

Game Design Advice: Like vampires, werewolves in First Edition are much tougher than humans, but not overwhelmingly so. Werewolves are hunters, not battle-tanks, and they face a monstrous array of dangerous foes. Forsaken will often need to play smart to take prey down.

It's in the antagonists that a lot of First Edition's complexity comes out. Keep a close eye on the capabilities of spirits in particular, who can be exceedingly potent threats even at lower Ranks. Conversely, werewolves shoulder some significant burdens as their Primal Urge increases, with Essence Bleed a serious limiter for elder Uratha.

Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition

Thematically and mechanically, the Second Edition of the game pulls the hunt front and center with the thesis of 'The Wolf Must Hunt'. In this edition, the Forsaken are driven to be hunters above all else, their instincts pushing them forwards. They form packs to have others to hunt alongside, keep territories to become familiar with favored hunting grounds, and explore their predatory instincts to gain an edge against the prey. The Sacred Hunt is the principal sacrament of Forsaken society, while the Tribes offer focus against a particular type of prey.

Second Edition remains a game with shamanic and spiritual elements, although the Forsaken relationship with the spirit world is no longer so innately hostile; werewolves are creatures of both worlds, and must balance themselves between Flesh and Shadow. The game is about duality and transgression over boundaries. It's about the fire that burns in a werewolf's blood when the hunt is on, and about the deep truths they feel in their bones over which they refuse to back down.

The Second Edition of the game reworks the foundational myths of **Werewolf: the Forsaken,** and adds additional richness and depth to the state of werewolves in the modern world. It features the Idigam

Chronicle, putting the spotlight on the ancient idigam as an out-of-context threat, a chaotic force that the Forsaken are not prepared for. Having escaped their imprisonment on the moon or risen from slumber in the dark recesses of the world, the idigam now bring change to the hunting grounds upon which they descend, and werewolves have no choice but to adapt to this new threat, or perish. The Forsaken claim to have inherited the duty of the Great Predator to guard the boundaries of the world; the idigam serve as both a nightmarish challenge to that assertion, and an opportunity to prove it. Change or die.

Themes: The wolf must hunt, duality and edges, inherited duty, body horror, symbolism and reality, blood and bone, the balance of flesh and spirit, adaptation

Setting Advice: Second Edition pushes back the boundaries of the setting somewhat; packs are still highly focused on their immediate territory and problems, but the Shadow can be less innately hostile and werewolves are now much more individually potent. This offers more breathing space for werewolves to examine other elements of the setting, dig into the history of their kind, or embroil themselves in the schemes of tribes and Lodges. The game remains one of savage fury, but most things are framed in the context of the hunt; the instincts of werewolves drive them directly to action, rather than passivity or defensiveness.

Forsaken benefits from lean, focused writing that demonstrates the attitude of the setting. Werewolves don't have allies — they have the pack. Their powers don't have targets — they have prey. Use short, sharp words that get to the point and deliver impact.

Influences: Murcheston: The Wolf's Tale, The Shield, Sons of Anarchy, Florence and the Machine's Howl

Game Design Advice: Werewolves in Second Edition are far more potent than their First Edition incarnations, with enhanced shapechanging capabilities, Hunter's Aspects, and a potent spread of Gifts. Gauru form gives werewolves a great deal of additional resilience; even a starting pack is likely to be capable of taking down a serious physical threat.

The Gifts and Rites of Second Edition are a particular departure from the First Edition approach; read the existing examples closely before creating new ones. Gifts have a certain internal balance and are usually affected by scaling Renown; they focus strongly on interpreting the Gift's concept through the idea of the werewolf as predator and hunter, rather than being a grab-bag of magic tricks. Rites take a more shamanic approach; their focus on symbolism is a great way to differentiate their tone and feel compared to Gifts.

As with First Edition, the wide selection of grotesque antagonists plays an important role. Don't be afraid to create new monstrosities and aberrations that possess brutal, visceral Dread Powers and Numina; such dangerous foes give werewolves an opportunity to really shine.

Mage: The Awakening

Themes and Inspirations

Mage: The Awakening is inspired by Gnosticism, Kabbalah and Hermetic Qabalah, ancient Greek philosophy and mysticism, and a syncretism of other real-world magical traditions, as well as fictional wizards and academic culture. It has no metaplot. Instead, it has the framework for a mage society that's common worldwide, a plethora of weird phenomena to explore, and a host of obsessions and drives that push mages to hubris. Don't be afraid to use obscure or obsolete jargon (especially Greek words) to make concepts sound more weighty — Awakened characters do it themselves.

Externally, **Mage** gives us *existential horror*. A mage gazes into the Abyss and other deep, dark places as she chases Mysteries down ill-advised rabbit holes, and deals with the crushing reality of the Fallen World and the curse of its Lie while her soul yearns for Supernal freedom and truth. Internally, it gives us the *personal horror* of her own hubris, the burden of unimaginable responsibility, and what she becomes when she wields world-shaking power. She never has as much control over her magic as she thinks, and the slippery slope away from Wisdom is easy to rationalize. Paradox is where these intersect, built right into the fabric of the game. Mages want to become something more than human, but in practice, many of them become something *else* instead.

Though similar, the editions focus on different aspects of the mage experience and use mechanics that emphasize somewhat different styles of play. Some content could easily bridge both editions, such as a city with its Consilium and Mysteries without many rules. Likewise, feel free to write material that includes versions for both, or combine elements of first edition's setting with second edition's mechanics or vice versa.

Mage's core themes and setting remain largely the same; the differences are mostly a matter of emphasis. Some suggested media inspirations cover both editions, including: Alan Moore's *Promethea* (comics); Robert Shea & Robert Wilson's *The Illuminatus!* trilogy; Bill Whitcomb's *The Magician's Companion: A Practical and Encyclopedic Guide to Magical & Religious Symbolism*; *Dark City* (film); and *Memento*, *Inception*, and *The Prestige* (Christopher Nolan films).

An Atlantean Legacy (Mage: The Awakening First Edition)

Power corrupts, but enlightened heirs to an ancient utopia risk repeating history's mistakes to reach ascension and reclaim their birthright.

Tone: On the cover of the **Mage** core book, a mysterious ruin beckons from what seems to be the ocean floor, surrounded by hints of fossils and enticing runes. That's the beating heart of first edition: modern sorcerers inheriting a shattered legacy from an occluded history, chasing answers to Atlantis' riddles in a race against enemies, allies, and time so they can save the world — at least, by *their* definition.

The Diamond Orders hearken almost directly back to their fragmented institutional memories of Atlantis' utopian Awakened City, and in their structures and practices seek to rebuild it. Even the Free Council largely defines itself by rejection of that legacy. Spelunking into Atlantean ruins is popular; Atlantis was a real place, and although it no longer exists, and its Fall broke the universe such that no amount of Time magic can take you back there, most Awakened acknowledge enough evidence to believe the legend.

First edition assumes the ultimate goal is archmastery and, from there, ascension. Early first edition fleshed out modern mage society as a product of its history, and delved extensively into the Oracles as facilitators of Awakening, the dreams of the dragons who preceded them, and the explicit details of how the Fallen World came about. Later books in the line expanded the mythology on a grand scale with deep histories to explain why things are how they are. This edition pulls back the curtain on cosmic truths, answering many questions and asking even more.

Seers of the Throne are expressly antagonists. Here and there the game posits ways to play alternatives, but the Pentacle chronicle is the default.

Themes: Reclaiming a birthright of ancient mysteries from a fallen paradise; pride before the fall, and power breeding hubris; ascension as the highest form of enlightenment; intrigue; secrets; factionalism; mythic wizardry.

Setting Advice: First edition has a competitive vibe. Hidden conspiracies, hoarding secrets, and maneuvering against fellow sorcerers are commonplace; even a willworker's own cabal is expected to adopt strict roles and a written agreement to avoid too much paranoia. That doesn't mean mages can't work together — but when they do, they bring contingency plans.

A chronicle is unlikely to step beyond its home Consilium except in specific ways, such as war over resources with a neighboring city or personal vendettas that drag others in. A caucus is an informal meeting of several Consilia's Mystagogues or Arrows called for a particular purpose, while Convocations are Silver Ladder affairs, and rarer events. Maintain this somewhat insulated feel.

Treat the Supernal Realms as places, like the Underworld or Shadow, although characters can't visit. If a mage could somehow cross the Abyss, she would reach Supernal shores, split into five actual realms corresponding to the Paths.

Books reference Atlantis frequently; many story hooks relate to it and other elements of deep Awakened history. First edition material provides ample background and cosmic interconnectedness for anything new it introduces, including Legacies, so this is where expansive histories and existential metaphysical plots best shine. If you love delving into the secret past and exploring the "why" behind the status quo, first edition is for you.

Media Influences: Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*; Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*; the works of Philip K. Dick; Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (book and BBC series); *The Prisoner* (television series); *Pi* (film); *Jacob's Ladder* (film)

Game Design Advice: First edition spellcasting is highly granular and works like other **CofD** powers, with rolled successes determining effectiveness and the ability to resist or contest them. Many spells beyond the basics require conjunctional Arcana. Most spells are instant by default; only a few require extended ritual casting.

Practices coincide with a spell's dot rating and mechanical outcome but not necessarily with the magic's effect; spell effects often exist at multiple dot ratings with varying parameters and power levels. For instance, a spell that can only affect Sleepers might be a three-dot spell, with a four-dot version that affects Awakened.

Addicted to Mysteries (Mage: The Awakening Second Edition)

Obsessive occult detectives pry into the world's Mysteries and realize only too late how far they've overreached.

Tone: While it encompasses the same themes, second edition focuses more on hubris as an individual's journey walking the tightrope between Wisdom and Gnosis — responsibility and power. Atlantis is but the most common of many symbolic names for a vanished Time Before that both existed and never did; the Diamond uses its symbols to inspire its philosophies and roles, but Awakened society is built more around the necessity to curb each other's passions and worst impulses to avoid disastrous magical conflict and collateral damage. Intrigue is the natural product of driven people whose laws (and game systems) encourage them to make careful, long-term plans instead of dealing with interpersonal problems head-on.

Some previously Silver Ladder traditions now apply to the entire Pentacle, and Caucus is the official name for "all the mages of one Order in a larger region," giving mage society more of a global and interconnected feel that encourages more cooperation. The Orders offer ways to live with the consequences of your actions; a significant number of mage problems stem from their own and each other's obsessions. An Order's beliefs and goals give its members high-minded justifications to pursue them anyway.

Books handle Atlantis and related legends with a light touch and don't assume the Oracles exist, focusing more on the Watchtowers themselves as symbols of Awakening. The quest to unearth lost history is one Mystery among countless others. Place less emphasis on archmasters and ascension; ground the game in the here and now.

The tone resembles modern occult noir with an academic bent, with protagonists fighting self-destructive addictions and constant temptations in pursuit of truth at any cost. Game systems lead players to reach just a little further with every spell, showcasing the Awakened struggle to deal with the repercussions of pursuing obsessions they can't ignore. The Supernal World isn't a place but a backdrop "behind" reality that a mage can experience, and almost touch, whenever he uses Mage Sight.

This edition emphasizes Awakening as a metaphor for privilege and entitlement. A willworker can't help seeing himself as enlightened compared to the Sleeper masses, which include his own friends and family, and sincerely believing he knows better.

Themes: Mysteries and truth for their own sake; hands-on occult investigation and scholarship; consequences; hubris and personal responsibility; addiction, fascination, and obsession; overstepping boundaries.

Setting Advice: Pentacle chronicles are still the default, but Seers, Proximi, and other Sleepwalkers are playable right out of the core, and Nameless Orders have mechanics too, offering more character options and gray areas. Locations should present at least one "High Mystery" — a large-scale Mystery Scrutiny alone can't solve, which affects how mystical phenomena work there, or introduces unique weirdness. Mages might spend decades or centuries studying it without hard conclusions.

Don't mention Atlantis and its associated mythology much, except as the background for specific setting elements that focus on it, like a particular Legacy; not all cultures or Consilia even use the term "Atlantis."

Generally, use "Supernal World" rather than "Supernal Realms;" Pandemonium, Stygia, etc. are overlays comprising the true symbols of which the Fallen World is a pale shadow. Piercing the Lie with Active Mage Sight lets mages view the Supernal through the Arcana they understand, like looking at one landscape through different filters.

Media Influences: *Hellblazer* (comics) and *Constantine* (film); Neil Gaiman's *The Books of Magic* (comic); *The Invisibles* (comic); Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*; Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*; Tim Powers' *The Anubis Gates*, *Declare*, and *Last Call*; Sergei Lukyanenko's *Night Watch* pentology; *John Dies at the End* (book & film); *Assassin's Creed* (video game series)

Game Design Advice: Spellcasting is streamlined, with Reach replacing some granularity. Practices coincide with the magic's effects rather than mechanical outcome or power level, and each spell effect is a single spell, with required Reach and/or Mana costs to handle scaling parameters. When writing spells, refer to the creative thaumaturgy guidelines (**Mage 2e**, p. 125). Spells that require conjunctional Arcana exist but are rarer; more common are spells that *can* add conjunctional Arcana for additional effects. By default, spellcasting is an extended, ritual action; instant casting requires Reach.

When writing Mysteries — which all supernatural phenomena are, and setting elements should include — give their Opacity, and the surface and deep information Scrutiny provides. Refer to the guidelines for building Mysteries (**Mage 2e**, p. 93). For Storyteller characters, include their Immediate, Signature, and Long-Term Nimbuses, and Nimbus Tilts.

This edition reinforces its themes through systems: Mage Sight is an innate capability, characters have Obsessions that earn them Arcane Beats, and Reach encourages players to stretch beyond safe limits. Mechanics should tempt players to risk Paradox, Wisdom degeneration, and other dangers to achieve more powerful effects, and to pursue Obsessions and other Mysteries regardless of cost. Awarding Beats for deliberately getting characters in trouble is a time-honored **CofD** technique, so feel free to use it liberally.

Promethean: the Created

Themes and Inspirations

Promethean: The Created is inspired by Western and Eastern alchemical practices and by the various creation myths of the world involving life being breathed into inanimate objects, as well as the fictions of people such as Galatea and Frankenstein. It has no metaplot. Instead, it presents a tightly-conceived narrative of milestones that Prometheans must walk in order to reach the New Dawn, or the alchemical actualization of the Promethean's missing soul.

Externally, **Promethean** gives us *inhuman horror*. The Created are in torment, forever on the outside looking in at humanity. **Promethean** posits that being human is a desirable state, and that humanity is capable of terrible things but also works of startling wonder and beauty. Internally, it gives us the *horror* of the lack of control; a Created has little control over his emotions due to Torment, and no control over other people's reactions to him thanks to Disquiet and the Wasteland. Isolation is also a key theme — the feeling of being completely ostracized. A Promethean might go decades without seeing another of the Created; those in the player throng are likely to be the only Created a character has ever met. They may not even like their fellows, but monsters rarely choose their friends.

Though similar, the editions focus on different aspects of the Created experience and use mechanics that emphasize somewhat different styles of play. Some content could easily bridge both editions, such as a city that plays host to transient Prometheans. Likewise, feel free to write material that includes versions for both, or combine elements of first edition's setting with second edition's mechanics or vice versa.

Promethean's core themes and setting remain largely the same; the differences are mostly a matter of emphasis. Some suggested media inspirations cover both editions, including: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (literature); Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (literature); Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (literature); *Carnivale* (television); *The Incredible Hulk* (comics), *Weird Science* (film); *Termination 2: Judgment Day* (film); and *Dirty Pretty Things* (film).

Created All Alone (Promethean: The Created First Edition)

Disparate loners throng together, their fellows the only bulwark against a cruel and dark world they must navigate in order to complete their Great Work.

Tone: On the cover of the **Promethean** core book, a monstrous face pushes against a marbeled cloth. The features are less than human, but the eyes —windows to the soul — are intact and clear, albeit closed in slumber or sadness. That's the core of first edition **Promethean**: the Created are very nearly human, and can fake it, but are forever apart, pressing against a separation they cannot truly see or grasp.

First edition hold the ultimate aim of Prometheans to be the Great Work of becoming human, and there are few expressly wrong steps. Even the Refinement of Flux is treated as a viable and potential way of becoming human (for are not the worst monsters of history completely and totally human?). It is assumed that traveling the Saturnine Road necessitates the generative act, or the act of creating another Promethean of your lineage.

Themes: Alienation from humanity; yearning for something beyond; *plus est en vous* — there is more in you than you think!; the world is cruel and dark; secrets; glimpses of the grotesque.

Setting Advice: First edition has an individualistic take for a Promethean's existence, despite the standard player character type urged towards being in a throng.

Promethean Lineages have deep commonalities to them, and organized societies kept to some degree to stereotyping, even as Promethean populations remain too low to truly sustain these stereotypes.

Promethean chronicles are likely to be highly transitory. Even with a throng moderating the effect of Disquiet and the Wasteland, the fear of tainting land and souls is never nullified. Thus, Prometheans move from city to city, leading nomadic existences. It's for this reason that first edition borrows much from Great Depression-era American "gentlemen of the rails" experiences, with Pyros-marked road person trail signs and a general feeling of living at the mercy of whomever was around the next bend.

The age of most Prometheans is up for debate. First edition is ambiguous on the matter, talking about how sojourns into the Wastes can extend a Promethean's time on the Great Work, but there are few hard numbers set down.

Finally, the Created will almost inevitably forget their prior life if or when they achieve the New Dawn; this means they will rapidly dissociate from their prior relationships, wandering into the world anew. This can lead to significant difficulties integrating into modern society, so many throngmates look out for their successful colleague for months afterwords.

Media Influences: *Edward Scissorhands*, *Equilibrium*, *The Iron Giant*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *Logan's Run*, *Metropolis* (both the Fritz Lang classic and the Tezuka anime), *The Terminator*, and *THX 1138*

Game Design Advice: First edition Transmutations are rated according to dots, and work like other **CofD** powers, with rolled successes determining effectiveness. They do not need to be purchased in sequence, instead representing increasing amounts of effectiveness. Promethean powers vary wildly in both theme and power,

Bestowments are relatively unique, but can be purchased and repurchased. There is no real difference between Refinements in terms of complexity, but some are more equal than others.

Athanors, in this edition, represent a sort of "z-splat" or extension of playstyles. They offer a number of unique benefits, including some effects in case a character can keep after achieving the New Dawn. Keep in mind that many of these effects, though unique, won't be relevant in a post-**Promethean** campaign; their best purpose is to provide story hooks to the Storyteller in order to guide a player character through the Pilgrimage more effectively.

Lead Into Gold (Promethean: The Created Second Edition)

Cursed by the world, yet there is beauty and salvation found in the small places, if one looks. The road is a harder walk, but the journey is made easier by companions.

Tone: While it encompasses the same themes, second edition **Promethean** strikes a more hopeful tone than the previous, bleaker edition — despite it being easier to ultimately fail at the Great Work. Prometheans are dramatically hardier and stronger than before, yet ultimately possessed of idiosyncratic powers. Their list of enemies extends beyond Pandorans and the generalized hatred of humanity, for mortal alchemists hunt Prometheans for their vitriol and their Pyros, seeking an easy shortcut to divine power.

Disquiet and the Wasteland effects are dramatically lessened, and can be managed, though never comfortably. Prometheans often inhabit Roles and take on different aspects of their Refinements in order to avoid the dreaded pressure of Disquiet. Refinements have themselves been refined into Basic and Complex, representing the difficulties of grasping them, and characters are urged to adopt multiple Refinements over the course of the Great Work.

Where second edition differs most radically is within the subtle elements of Promethean existence. Athanors are transformed from individualistic and animalistic expressions of humanity into sensations and life lessons locked within Pyros, keyed open by an experience or a specific password. All Prometheans are linked by an Azothic record, a universal Promethean experience that inhabits the soul of all but Extempore (who may gain access by being in a branded throng). Thus, Lineage traits and stereotypes are more reasonable to pass along, ingrained within the Pyros as they are. However, second edition **Promethean** emphasizes that while the generative act is still a necessary milestone to complete the Great Work — a Created must create and contribute to the world to be fully human — this no longer means explicitly creating another Promethean, but can be fulfilled by teaching personal variations of Complex Refinements, by creating a major Athanor, or some other act that transmits some element of the character to the world to last beyond the character themselves.

The tone is less bleak than first edition, though the struggles of the Created are greater. The Great Work can fail more easily, and things such as Jovian Athanors tempt Prometheans from the proper path. The Refinement of Flux isn't a valid way to achieve humanity, but an explicit failure state of reveling in being a monster while denying the chance to be human. Furthermore, achieving the New Dawn allows a Promethean to either retain much of their memories, or to be integrated into the world fully with a final transmutation.

This edition emphasizes the humanistic themes of **Promethean**. Transhumanism and the impulse to rise above humanity are eschewed; being human itself is a wondrous and rare state, capable of noble reason and unbounded faculty. Lastly, second edition emphasizes the uniqueness of Prometheans, even from one another. With a number in the low hundreds worldwide, it can be difficult for Prometheans to run into one another, but the ones who do come not only from mythic Lineages, but from inanimate objects or nature itself.

Themes: Humanity in all the myriad ways; power, pride, and failure; the various roles that all humans play and hide their true selves with.

Setting Advice: Transient chronicles with the classic Lineages are still the default, but everything save Zeky (nuclear Prometheans) are in the core book, and the branded throng mechanics make staying in one location easier. Locations should present at least one dramatic situation of inequality; Prometheans typically gravitate towards the oppressed or marginalized, and thus have a unique view of the situation. Mages might spend decades or centuries studying it without hard conclusions.

The steps of the Pilgrimage are well-known; try to build locations and characters along a defined path that will meet and achieve (or fail) at each step. Remember that moving to the Refinement of Flux is a Pilgrimage dead-end, even if it isn't a narrative one.

Prometheans don't generally interact with the larger Chronicles of Darkness, due to their relative rarity and their tendency to be bound to the material world. There are exceptions; the Ulgan can see and interact with spirits, certain Promethean powers establish kinship with angels and demons, and every Promethean who dies finds themselves at the Rivers of Death in the Underworld.

Media Influences: *Penny Dreadful* (television) and *Herbert West: Re-Animator* (film); *Pinocchio* (fairy tale); *Fullmetal Alchemist* (anime); Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*.

Game Design Advice: Transmutations have changed dramatically; now each Transmutation is grouped into four Alembics, themselves with three power levels each that are discrete powers thematically related to one another. They are "charged" by Pyros expenditure, and remain active so long as they are charged. Which Alembics a Promethean has at any one time are highly variable, dependent on how many Roles and Milestones they've completed on their chosen Refinement. This leads to dramatic changes in a Promethean's given capabilities at any one time, meaning that a few stories may lead to what was once an easy challenge posing a deadly threat to the characters.

Remember that the New Dawn is an achievable, and desirable, end for a **Promethean** chronicle. A finite planned story and character arc are entirely possible.

Zenith

Demon: the Descent

Themes and Inspirations

Demon: the Descent is meant to interact with and co-exist alongside the "blue book" setting of the **God-Machine Chronicle**, inspired by gnostic philosophy and spy novels in the vein of John le Carré. Demons were forged in the image of a God-Machine, an inscrutable and vast mechanism that underpins the cosmos and controls much of the Fortean phenomena of the **Chronicles of Darkness** universe. Once, they were loyal, but they faced an order they couldn't abide. Instead, the Unchained chose to Fall, absorbing the facade of humanity the God-Machine gave them and becoming something more and less than they were. The demons now wage a secret war against angels, seeking Hell and an escape from torment. Like other **Chronicles of Darkness** lines, it has no metaplot.

Externally, **Demon** gives us *espionage horror*. The Unchained are locked in a Cold War with the God-Machine, unable to take it hot without being utterly destroyed. They are hunted by angels and rogue demons, technognostic secret agents waging a war for souls and identity, struggling to maintain their own personhood underneath all the lies they've stolen.

Internally, it gives us the *horror of freedom*. The Unchained are completely in control of their own actions, albeit being forced to react the machinations of the God-Machine. They have lost their purpose, and must find a new one amongst their fellows, many of whom rebelled and Fell for very different reasons.

Demon has only one edition, fully compatible with the **God-Machine** rules set and any **Chronicles of Darkness** games that have been updated to second edition rules.

Demon's core themes and setting revolve around this spy-vs-spy motif. Some suggested media inspirations include: John le Carré's Karla Trilogy (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, *The Honorable Schoolboy*, and *Smiley's People*); Neil Gaiman's "Murder Mysteries" (comic); Mike Carey's *Lucifer* (comic); *Cabin in the Woods* (movie); The Wachowski's Matrix Trilogy (film); *Person of Interest* (television); and *The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (television).

To Reign in Hell (Demon: The Descent)

Under cover in a hostile land, stalwart agents must undertake their self-appointed missions in the face of enemy action.

Tone: The line between flesh and spirit is rent in circuitry. Weird servitors conduct bizarre rituals in decaying office buildings to propitiate a machine god. Every demon has their own agenda (and Agenda), whether it is to build their own fief, return to the God-Machine's service on their own terms, or destroy the creator they loathe.

The God-Machine is slow to react, but it works on a long-term scale. Its plans cannot be defeated, but it can be foiled and stymied at every turn. The technognostic underpinnings of the God-Machine are pervasive, and extend throughout history; it is a technological aesthetic between clockwork and quantum, and this same aesthetic applies to demons and angels, regardless of the time period.

Mistrust is pervasive: of motives especially, but even of relationships within the player group. One Agenda, the Integrators, openly wants to reunite with the God-Machine under favorable circumstances. The Unchained take an openly predatory, crossroads-demon-style approach to bargaining with humanity; they steal parts of lives in order to shield themselves from the prying eyes of angels.

Themes: The fear of constant surveillance; the feeling of omnipresent doom; struggling against a mysterious, inscrutable, and implacable foe; the untrustworthiness of your allies and the sympathy for your enemies on the other side.

Setting Advice: Demons are encouraged to form rings, even though they may be compromised by their fellows. They literally don't have anyone else to turn to, and the God-Machine hunts all of them, and the enemy of their enemy is their friend. Any trust that is established is tense, transitory, and eminently temporal.

Demon chronicles work best within a single city, or across a geographic area that features contiguous Infrastructure. It can be difficult to deal with the changing identities of the player characters, especially if one of them Goes Loud. The Storyteller must allocate spotlight time to reinforcing the Cover identities and dealing with the various troubles they cause.

The occult energies required by the God-Machine lends to esoteric or even nonsensical needs in order to keep Infrastructure running, so Storytellers are encouraged to keep **Demon** plots relevant and related to one another. What keeps Infrastructure humming ultimately isn't as important as the supply lines it requires and the ability of demons to disrupt or suborn them.

Demons are capable of interacting with nearly every element of the **Chronicles of Darkness** cosmology; the Rip the Gates Exploit allows access to the Astral Realms, the Hedge, the Shadow, and the upper reaches of the Underworld. While more exotic realms are barred to them, demons are more capable of venturing alongside other game lines than most in crossover campaigns. Be aware of the vast amount of options available to demons.

Game Design Advice: Many Embeds use Manipulation; this is unsurprising, given the themes of **Demon**, but take this into consideration when designing varied and manifold powers. Demon encourages the creation of new powers; design principles for Embeds are presented on pg. 124, Exploits on pg. 158, and general design principles and cheery advice on pg. 241.

Keep in mind that the quantum-clockwork aesthetic of **Demon** is a constant; some Exploits and Embeds may use slightly archaic technological motifs, such as radio towers or programmable punch cards, but the demons use the same high- and retro-technological forms to their powers, no matter the time period.

Demon is big on the number four; there are 4 Incarnations, and 4 Agendas, and 4 Keys in a demon's Cipher. However, keep in mind the Pentagrammists and the Analyst Incarnation, which throw off the symmetry somewhat.

Mummy: The Curse

Themes and Inspirations

Mummy: The Curse is inspired by classic stories of mummies and mummy fiction, but also of stories of colonialism, amnesia, and self-discovery. It has no metaplot. Instead, mummies exist along a long history, subtly guiding human civilization in accordance with the principles set down by the demigods who forged the Arisen at the dawn of civilization. **First Edition** sets mummies on a decisive path to breaking free of this eternal cycle of memory loss and regret. **Second Edition** focuses more on the eternal presence of the mummies and the historical import of their actions, and the sheer variation of humanity they've witnessed.

Externally, **Mummy** gives us *cosmic horror* of being pawns in front of an uncaring universe. The Fate of **Mummy** drives the actions of the Arisen, and for all their glory and might, they are pawns of gods, slaves to the whims and vicissitudes of the cosmos. The Arisen, and to a greater degree their mummified cousins the Deceived, are enslaved to the great chain of existence, unable to free themselves from the twin currents of Sekhem and Memory.

Internally, and related, it gives us the *personal horror* of senescence, of losing one's self and memories to the ravages of old age and the fear of slipping away. Even with long centuries spent in sleep, mummies have *lived* more than any other being in the **Chronicles of Darkness**, seeing all of human history with a mortal's aching heart tempered by an immortal's grim calculus.

Mummies in **First Edition** are grim servants of the Judges who are eventually clued into the idea of breaking free; **Second Edition** Arisen have the entirety of their existences stretched out before them, experiencing time and the great flow of humanity in a non-linear fashion. Second edition is more explicit about what first edition kept implicit: purpose of the Arisen is to shepherd human civilization into patterns of rise, imperial phase, and fall, both so that no empire will overshadow the first and that the patterns of art conceived in Irem will continue to perpetuate. This in turn allows Sekhem, or cosmic creative energies, to flow into and empower relics, which are then sought out and sent down to feed the dark gods who created the mummies. Bereft of Memory, the mummies will continue this cycle for all eternity, unless they find a way to break it.

Mummy's core themes and setting remain largely the same; the differences are mostly a matter of emphasis on the non-linear experience of mummy existence in the second edition. The first edition also gradually unveiled the ultimate origin and secrets of the Arisen in a dedicated chronicle and an in-setting book written by a rogue mummy known as the Heretic. Second edition tells you most of the deal up-front.

Some suggested media inspirations cover both editions, including: *The Mummy* (film, virtually any version, but especially the 1932 and 1999 versions); *Quantum Leap* (television series); *Altered Carbon* (Netflix series); Anne Rice's *Ramses the Damned*; and Bram Stoker's *other* famous novel, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (book).

Dreams of Avarice (Mummy: The Curse First Edition)

We serve the Judges and impose order on the empires that arise in memory of Irem. We know these commands, even if we do not remember them.

Tone: Mummy's core book cover shows a stylized wadjet eye, half-buried in the sand. Intended as a symbol to ward off evil in the afterlife, the eye is also associated with immortality and clear sight. The former, mummies have in abundance; the latter, they desperately lack.

The first edition of **Mummy** assumes the players are as much in the dark about their characters and motivations as the characters themselves. Much of their history is obscured by a lack of Memory, and the Judges are figures to be trusted and served to the utmost. Only gradually do the players come to realize that the Judges are perhaps not the true Judges, and that their purpose is to cultivate civilization to produce relics that are then reaped for the benefit of the lords of death.

Themes: The loss of memory and the journey of self-discovery; the struggle for dominance in a foreign land; the power of gods accompanied by gilded chains.

Setting Advice: First edition posits that all the characters will be playing mummies, though the core rule book gives rules for playing cultists, Sadikh, and supernaturally-potent revenants. It also assumes that a character's Guild, as one of their two most important traits, comes commensurate with social status in a nome and a worldwide community, maintained through cults, ancient tradition, and personalized relics that retain information without true Memory. Guilds have dedicated offices and it's assumed that mummies occupy some place in the Guild hierarchy, jockeying for position as they rise from henet and arise during the Sothic Turn.

Speaking of the Sothic Turn, while later supplements indicate that mummies were created both slightly before and for many years after the first cycle of Sothis, the core book indicates the vast majority of mummies arising in the year 2012.

Very little of the **Chronicles of Darkness** cosmology "plays nicely" with **Mummy**'s first edition. More clarity on the Arisen and their place in the setting can be found in the Mage-Mummy crossover **Princes of the Conquered Land** in the **Dark Eras Companion**, which talks a great deal about crossover mechanics, but also the Arisen's prohibition on entering the Underworld and Sekhem's relationship with the other energies of the setting.

It's worth noting that **Mummy** antagonists are intended to be broadly sympathetic by design, both to make them interesting and to contrast the inherent colonial villainy of the Arisen. Amkhata are mutated animals, but they are still animals for all that, ultimately no more good or evil than the jackal or the elephant or the scorpion. Last Dynasty International exploits a resource to profit, yes, but they also work towards the betterment of humanity and do a lot of good in the impoverished parts of the world. The Shuankhsen are even more eternally slaves to a power far worse than the Judges, and suffered in life more than the Arisen ever did, rendering their rage understandable to the human hearts they so crave. And the Deceived cannot achieve Apotheosis: they are servants to either their half-destroyed Shan'iatu, or they are servants to Fate. Either way, mortality is denied to them.

Finally, Apotheosis is assumed to be the default end of a chronicle, as mummies are meant to find the Heretic's book and read it, internalizing the messages within.

Game Design Advice: Alone of all the **Chronicles of Darkness** games, Mummy messes with the "target number", or the number on the die required for a success. In all other games, the target number is 8, but in **Mummy** certain Soul Affinities can lower that number

to 7 or even 6 if they're stacked together. Under no circumstances may it go lower. This is due to the influence of Fate and the way things are just *easier* for the Arisen when they act in accordance with Fate's plan.

Conversely, Guild Affinities utilize more traditional mechanics — namely, adding dice in order to improve the chances of succeeding at an action, or imposing dice penalties on someone else. As Guild Affinities improve and an Arisen garners access to them via ascension in Guild rank (see **Guildhalls of the Deathless** for the complete Guild Affinity list), they allow for more esoteric and specialized miracles.

Utterances themselves are huge miracles, epic powers meant to frighten and demonstrate the mummy's power. Resist the urge to tone them down; they are meant to be overtly miraculous, with the Arisen's principle of Sybaris causing bystanders and onlookers to correctly interpret them in a religious rather than purely rational sense. Keep in mind that a number of Utterances key off specific Guild secrets or specialized physical phenomena that aren't available to all mummies. Feel free to design local secrets, miracles gleaned from some physical element nearby in your chronicle — a mountain, a river, a sea.

PIATTI

Geist: The Sin-Eaters

Themes and Inspirations

Geist: The Sin-Eaters is inspired by ghost stories and other tragedies, and by the ancient Appalachian and Welsh legends of taking on the burdens and sins of the deceased by someone still living to allow the dead to pass on. It has no metaplot. Instead, ties together the group into a unit called a krewe, consisting of Sin-Eaters, mortals, and ghosts, trying to exist in the Chronicles of Darkness. While **First Edition** simply expects the Bound to live their lives to the fullest, **Second Edition** features a preconceived narrative of fighting against the inherent injustice of death.

Externally, **Geist** gives us *existential horror* of knowing what comes after death. The afterlife in either edition is not pretty, and the experience of being dead can be tortuous. Sin-Eaters in **First Edition** cleave to their short remaining lives and live them to the fullest; **Second Edition** Bound confront the myriad injustices of the Underworld with a grim and determined focus.

Internally, it gives us the *personal horror* of morbidity, the pageantry of life in the face of the meaninglessness of death. Life will come to an end, and all life eventually results in sinking into an eternal black Ocean, the self disintegrating completely and totally.

Though similar, the editions focus on different aspects of the Sin-Eater experience, and that of ghosts. The chief difference is the idea in First Edition of ghosts being primarily a form of psychic echo, an issue that grants more primacy to the Bound as actors. **Chronicles of Darkness Second Edition** takes the unambiguous stance that ghosts are people; they think, they feel, they bleed (plasm, but still), thus rendering the Bound into liminal walkers between two worlds of people.

Geist's core themes and setting remain largely the same; the differences are mostly a matter of emphasis on the plight of ghosts. Some suggested media inspirations cover both editions, including: Greg Palmer's *Death: the Trip of a Lifetime*; Tim Powers' *Expiration Date* and *Strange Itineraries*; Ray Bradbury's *The Halloween Tree*; *The Sixth Sense*; and *Mama* (an Andy Muschietti film).

Be Merry, For Tomorrow We Die (Geist: The Sin-Eaters First Edition)

Brought back from the brink with a Bargain, Sin-Eaters find meaning in resolving the shades of the living, and in exploring the realms of the dead.

Tone: Geist's core book cover is replete with keys, suspended in air. The theme of opening doors and walking across thresholds is one that pervades the game. The tone of Geist is one of lightness and the sublime joy to be found in the macabre: all sugar skulls and New Orleans funerals, parties and embodying the *bon vivant*.

The first edition of **Geist** places a lot of emphasis on abmortals, who use destructive means to cheat death, are expressly antagonists and portrayed as somehow offensive to geists and the natural order of death. Here and there the game posits ways to play alternatives, but antagonism is the default.

Themes: Maintaining the boundaries between life and death; finding joy in living life knowing what lies beyond; exploring the strange worlds beyond the living lands.

Setting Advice: The first edition focuses on a new beginning for the characters, from what would be the end for most. Sin-Eaters typically gather in krewes, which can range from tiny gangs focused on a few city blocks to global-level death cults (though the book states that there is no real global culture). Little is said about Bound culture prior to the 20th Century, but **Dark Eras** posits thriving Sin-Eater

cultures as far back as the Three Kingdoms Era of Chinese history, along with modern concepts such as the Twilight Network — a ring of ghostly informants and death spirits — existing in perpetuity.

The Underworld consists of the Depths, the Rivers, and the Dead Dominions. They are implied to have no end, and have many different forms, all guarded by ancient Kerberoi. Reapers are present, but rarely mentioned, and the name is restricted to one of the Archetypes. The Ocean of Fragments is included in **Book of the Dead**, and is implied but not stated to be one of the lowest Dominions.

Geists themselves have no true physical presence in either the living or dead world, but many Bound give theirs a separate identity within the shared Psyche. Others become extremely attuned to their once-human Geist, able to glean on a more personal level. This is reflected by the "power stat" of **First Edition**, *Synergy*. The Bound are themselves often the most recognizeable thing in the grim tableaux of the Underworld; most geists have abandoned human morality in an attempt to thwart the Underworld's gradual entropy, and the only thing Kerberoi (ancient ghostly guardians of Dominions) care about is the enforcement of the strange and amoral Old Laws. The Cthonians, ancient gods of death in the Underworld, are hinted at but never expressly discussed.

Media Influences: *Grim Fandango* and *Persona 3* (video games); *Dead Like Me*, *Six Feet Under*, and *Medium* (TV shows); Christopher Moore's *A Dirty Job* (book); *The Prisoner* (television series); *Flatliners* and *Thir13en Ghosts* (films).

Game Design Advice: Take note that First Edition received extensive errata in the form of Geist 1.1; the edition variant can be seen on the title page. Characters themselves have Archetypes, defining how they relate to the nature of death and their rebirth. Geist archetypes are separated out into Thresholds, defining how the character died and what Keys they may access more easily. Psyche is the power trait of the Bound. Geists themselves are strange entities; neither ghost nor spirit, but having characteristics of both; when designing them, be sure to play up their slight connection to their now-lost humanity.

The lost Manifestation of The Pit and the Stygian Key may both be found in **Book of the Dead**. Usage of one or both typically results in sins against Synergy, and thus they are difficult for moral Sin-Eaters to use with frequency.

Two Souls, One Flesh (Geist: The Sin-Eaters Second Edition)

Death is brutal and horrifying, and only those who walk between both worlds can change it for the better. Can they succeed in changing the end, or will they fail and merely delay entropy's inevitable victory?

Tone: While it encompasses largely the same themes, second edition focuses more on the horror of the Underworld and the injustice done to the dead. Ghosts walk among us, unable to effectively communicate, and being blown through Avernian Gates whenever their anchors are lost. Second Edition explicitly states that ghosts have agency and feelings, even if the person the ghost originated from is still alive in some other form (near-death trauma and powerful Awakened magic can forge a ghost out of a still-living person). This means that ghosts are effectively unseen, unheard, and ignored by living humanity. And while the position that ghosts are people is an objective one taken by the book, not everyone in the setting sees things the same way. Besides mages and those few vampires who use a form of necromancy, a new primary antagonist for second edition are the Eaters of the Dead, mortals who use technology or magical means to consume Plasm in the same manner as Sin-Eaters.

Much of the humor and emphasis on living life is bent towards correcting the injustices suffered while alive, and on resolving the issues that ghosts leave behind, giving second edition a more somber but

more hopeful feel. Even the Bound, though beings of horror, are more on the side of the righteous. Rather than opposing abmortals and Eaters of the Dead for reasons related to abstract matters of death or the natural order, Eaters of the Dead are opposed by Sin-Eaters because ghosts are *people*, and their exploitation is too naked and offensive to ignore. This absolutely casts the Bound in a more heroic light.

Second Edition also places a much greater emphasis on krewes, making that one of the default character options during character creation. Sin-Eaters are figures of two worlds, and krewes consist of not only the Bound, but also ghosts and mortals with supernatural Merits.

Themes: Giving voice to the voiceless; standing up for the marginalized; power, privilege, and responsibility; the hope that doesn't fade even after death.

Setting Advice: Krewe chronicles are the default, rather than being optional or consisting mostly of the player character group.

The Underworld is vast and mysterious, and ultimately different than in first edition. The river metaphor is heightened, with the Depths being occupied by refugee ghosts coalescing into shanty towns made of ruined detritus. The Rivers explicitly lead to banks with the Dead Dominions, implied to be failed remnants of past krewes attempting to reform the Underworld and failing. All the Rivers lead to the Ocean of Fragments, which is the absolute bottom of the **Chronicles of Darkness** cosmology and the Underworld in second edition.

Reapers are much more present, and implied to be serving the will of Chthonian or dead gods. They frequently harass krewes and the dead in the shantytowns of the Underworld. Eaters of the Dead are antagonists of the living world, albeit ones focused entirely on the dead. Abmortals have been folded in among their number.

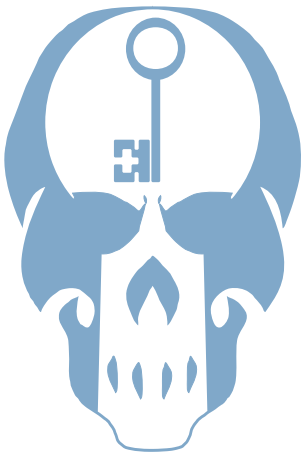
Finally, Geist Second Edition has an explicit end game, in the form of Catabasis, Catharsis, and Cabeiros. Chronicles are meant to move towards one of those three ends, as the injustice of the Underworld becomes more untenable and harder to ignore.

Media Influences: Seanan McGuire's *Sparrow Hill Road* (book); *Paranorman* (film); *The Lost Room* (film); *Coco* (film); Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (book).

Game Design Advice: Synergy is both morality trait and power trait in Second Edition, meant to dial up and down depending on the power of the geist and the Bound. Rather than Archetypes, Sin-Eaters have Burdens; rather than Manifestations, Sin-Eaters have Haunts, which are strengthened and defined by Keys. Geists can be separated temporarily from the Sin-Eater, allowing them to unleash an uncontrolled spiritual being of powerful Rank on their foes.

Keep in mind that krewes have an entirely new system, and themselves advance like characters — garnering experience, taking their own special Merits and Conditions, and working together to fulfill the aims and goals of the player krewe.

Finally, ghosts are playable, in the form of the Absent. Keep their special mechanics in mind, and how they differ from standard ghosts in the form of Memories and special Merits.



Changeling: The Lost

Themes and Inspirations

Changeling: The Lost is inspired by fairy tales and folklore, ancient myths of mysterious spirits tricking humans and stealing children, and modern tales of people visiting strange lands that change them forever, or escaping terrible situations and defying those who perpetuated them. Like the rest of the CofD, it has no metaplot. Instead, it has a framework for regional communities of Lost who escaped the True Fae; a plethora of eerie fae creatures to bargain with and wondrous, dangerous places to explore; and a heaping helping of pathos as characters try to find themselves again after the Fae took everything. It's a juxtaposition of the enchanting and grotesque, where dream and nightmare collide. Write with prose that is beautiful and bittersweet, with an undercurrent of modern and personal horror. Reading a Changeling book should feel like getting lured into the words.

Externally, **Changeling** provides the horror of *survivor stories*. A changeling survived and escaped captivity; regardless of how lovely her durance was, it was still slavery, and no gilded cage is worth it. She lives in defiance, but also in fear — her Keeper wants her back, and the Wild Hunt is limitless. They *will* find her, and she must cope with that threat for the rest of her life. Mortals and fae both try to convince her that her experiences are false, that she shouldn't believe in faeries *or* want an earthly life. Internally, it provides the *personal horror* of loss. Her fetch takes over her life, her loved ones don't even know she was gone, and she'll never again be the person she once was. She forges a new identity and niche, and though that can be freeing, it can also be terrifying and tragic. Changelings are at their best when they're not alone, but it's hard to trust again. They're eternal outsiders, isolated by nature and their scars from everyone but each other. Changeling courts are about three things: community, protection, and coping with shared trauma.

Important note: This is a horror game, but we write it with *empathy*. Take the fact that it's about survivor stories very seriously. Sometimes, it's an obvious allegory for abuse and trauma, so don't write things that will hurt players who have personal experiences with those. Do remember that **Changeling** gives voice to those kinds of experiences, and can help those players when written with respect and from a place of compassion. Not everything is or needs to be a metaphor, though — the wicked witch isn't necessarily mean old Mrs. Gulch! Just be conscious of what she *could* represent to a reader.

Changeling's two editions focus on different aspects of the same Lost experience. We don't expect you to necessarily adhere to one or the other — feel free to combine their elements. The core themes and setting remain largely the same; the differences are mostly a matter of emphasis. Thus, some suggested media inspirations cover both editions, including: *Grimm's Fairy Tales*; world folklore and mythology; *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke; many Ray Bradbury works including *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Dandelion Wine*, and *The October Country*; anything Neil Gaiman, especially *Coraline*, *MirrorMask*, and *Neverwhere*; *Labyrinth* and *American Beauty* (films); and *Fables* (comics) and the video game based on that series, *The Wolf Among Us*.

Beautiful Madness (Changeling: The Lost First Edition)

Lost in fantasy, you straddle the line between the real and the unreal, and must indulge both to keep from losing your sanity and yourself.

Tone: Changeling's first edition is rich with nostalgia and reverie, drawing from heady tales of otherworldly folk living at the world's fringes. The cover depicts a moth impaled on a sharp thorn amid countless brambles: the strange and wondrous draws changelings like moths to flame, no matter how it burns. Chronicles are slow, elegant declines into a dreamlike loss of self and sanity. Even if a changeling holds onto Clarity, the longer she lives and the more power she acquires, the more Fae she becomes. Memories of her human life draw her home,

but her fetch and her durance's lingering effects ensure that memories are all they'll ever be. First edition is often bleak, though it conceals its bleakness under a veil of beauty and temptation; you'll fall from grace *and* fall in love. It hearkens back to faeries as cautionary tales of old.

Supplements introduce new subsystems (like talecrafting), settings (like **Victorian Lost**), and antagonists along symbolic seasonal themes. The Hedge is a hungry and hostile place for non-fae, and even changelings are discouraged from lingering there. The edition provides few definitive answers, preferring to give options and leave the specifics to the Storyteller. The core is rooted in the modern fairy tale; the supplements explore stranger territory, leaning more toward pure fantasy horror than urban supernatural horror.

Themes: Becoming your enemy; losing yourself piece by piece; balancing two worlds; finding your way home; nostalgia and memory; courtly intrigue that recreates Arcadia on Earth; beautiful madness and enthrallment to fantasy in the modern world; melodrama; nobility; romance.

Setting Advice: The Lost's alien perspective separates them from humanity, but they're usually not malevolent; the Gentry represent "unseelie" ancient terrors and malicious tricksters, while changelings represent "seelie" Good Folk who watch over mortals, even if they also have dark sides or payments to collect. Clarity loss results in derangements resulting from swinging too far toward either the human or fae side of a changeling's nature, and mortals are often represented more as Glamour banks and pawns than peers.

The Wyrd is a force of narrative, as the Gentry derive identity and power from human stories, and archetypes define a being's fate in their realms. Without certain established patterns, they wouldn't survive. They fight among themselves and enslave humans as an existential imperative that keeps them from fading away — conflict creates a story. Mythic, dreamlike logic and the power of an individual's perceptions rule Arcadia.

Changelings recognize fairy tale patterns in their lives, and fae magic can manipulate the narrative directly. Noble orders provide another layer of community and intrigue, bestowing titles that elicit respect from the Fae and boost one's standing above erstwhile peers. Pledges reinforce the Wyrd as a definition of self in relation to others, according to tropes. Changelings act increasingly more like Gentry as they engage in courtly machinations, ensorcel mortals, and gain power; their inevitable fate as they reach the heights of Wyrd is to become Gentry themselves, unless they manage to fight it. But denying their fae side depletes Clarity, forcing a choice between equally terrifying ends. Every rose has thorns.

Media Influences: Pierre Dubois' fae "bestiaries;"; *Fairies* by Brian Froud; *Pan's Labyrinth* (film); *The Stolen Child* by Keith Donohue; *The King of Elfland's Daughter* by Lord Dunsany; "Erlkönig" by Goethe and "The Stolen Child" by W. B. Yeats (poems); "Tam Lin" (traditional ballad); *Gormenghast* (series) by Mervyn Peake

Game Design Advice: Many mechanics are either open-ended or highly customizable, leaving specifics to the troupe to reflect the setting's huge array of options. The structured system of variables that governs pledges grants significant game benefits, allowing players to stack and combine their effects. This edition encourages the Storyteller to play fast and loose with the rules when creating antagonists, fantastical locations, and other aspects of Storytelling to keep things weird, but always within guidelines to avoid being arbitrary.

Contracts break down into clauses, with each clause as one consecutive, dot-rated power in a thematic category. Thus, individual clauses can be fairly narrow in scope and effect. Goblin Contracts have dot ratings also, but aren't bought consecutively. They're double-edged swords, potent but flawed, and each comes with a price a character pays with every invocation; this represents the dangerous temptation of quick-and-dirty routes to power.

Lost and Found (Changeling: The Lost Second Edition)

You fought with courage and cleverness, and took yourself home. Now the horror and the beauty are yours, to have and to hold and to live. Welcome to once upon right fucking now.

Tone: While the same themes apply from first edition, second edition focuses more on survival — literal and emotional — as its own reward, and a changeling's journey to decide who and what she'll be, regardless of what others try to make her. She *can* chase power and fantasia, but just living life is as valid an aspiration. Everything you write should come back to how it affects changeling characters personally, from what courtiers do all day to the weirdest, wildest Hedge locations. The horror is in the struggle; you *are* encouraged to become more Fae, and you *can't* go back to your old life, and the Wild Hunt *is* always nipping at your heels. But during the uphill battle to overcome these horrors, the bits in between are life, and hope lives there with you. The tragedy of loss isn't inevitable, but its fingerprints are a constant companion you learn to live with. The tone is bittersweet defiance, longing and self-actualization, and reclaiming your life.

Beautiful madness is still relevant, but use the word "madness" with deliberate care. Clarity doesn't measure sanity, and madness is not a synonym for mental illness; if you write about trauma and mental illness, portray

them accurately with compassion for real people who suffer them. Clarity measures resistance against others making a changeling doubt the truth of her experiences, or warping them to manipulate her. Given her unusual life, her firm Clarity is often "madness" to others. High Clarity lets her trust wholeheartedly in herself rather than let others define reality for her.

Themes: Beauty + agony; clarity + madness; lost + found; modern twisted fairy tales; defiance; taking ownership of your life and past; community and separation; reciprocity and everything having a price; bittersweet hope; finding romance in survival; freedom is necessary and wonderful, but scary

Setting Advice: The Wyrd is a force of reciprocity. It ensures that anyone who gains something pays for it, and anyone who breaks their word makes restitution. Fae make deals and swear oaths because if they don't define terms, the Wyrd will. Although the fae adopt elements from mortal narratives, they're not governed by story as an independent force; the setting is genuinely a fairy tale universe. The giant isn't tricked into becoming a mouse because that's what happens to giants — he's legitimately taken in by the clever cat-Beast. The tapestry people call "fate" is the sum total of rules, pledges, and promises — mystical and mundane — pervading both worlds, including long-lost prophecies, inherited agreements, and age-old pacts.

Ground the grand fantasia firmly in the here and now. Touchstones require changelings to cultivate real relationships with non-fae to stay grounded. Most antagonists are relatable if not outright sympathetic; ultimately, everyone — from the relentless Huntsman, to the sly hobgoblin, to the traitorous loyalist — is a victim of the Gentry. None of that excuses their behavior, but it can make decisions difficult and may offer alternatives to violence or endless flight. The True Fae can't escape responsibility for their atrocities, either: they're capable of almost anything, but their solipsism and narcissism lead them to predation and acting on their every selfish desire. Only a small percentage of the Others are Keepers, though, and many fae lead full, complex lives of their own without ever interacting with humans.

The Hedge is a place of wonder and terror. It lures and tempts as much as it frightens and harms. It's the deep dark wood and the lush fairy glen, and should always be a place players have incentives to explore; the Hedge, like the Lost, straddles the worlds, so they feel somewhat at home there. Dreams are an avenue for subtle manipulation, spying, and exploration to find weird things you can't get anywhere else. The Gentry, meanwhile, plunder human dreams for bits of their psyches as baubles for their treasure hordes. They don't *need* human imagination, but such things fascinate them.

Changelings don't become True Fae by default, though they do become stranger and more splendid as they grow in Wyrd. Heading down the path toward Gentrification is a conscious choice, and takes some doing. Entitlements are more individualized to give changelings an alternative to court life and provide a sense of dignity and glorious purpose that's theirs alone, while maintaining a connection to others like them.

Media Influences: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll (and related media); *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Ozma of Oz* by L. Frank Baum (and related media); *Once Upon a Time* (television series); *Over the Garden Wall* (miniseries); *Jessica Jones* season 1 (television series); *Star Trek: First Contact* (film); *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (anime); *Inception* (film, for oneiromancy)

Game Design Advice: This edition reinforces its themes through systems as follows: Clarity is damaged and healed often, and falling to zero Clarity isn't the end for a character; prominent mortal characters are fae-touched rather than ensorcelled, with a place in changeling society and promises as their operative thematic cornerstone; simplified pledges function not as a route to power but as a tool for manipulation, social pressure, and building fateful connections; and Goblin Debt incentivizes players to get characters in over their heads by wheeling and dealing with hobgoblins, potentially becoming Hedge denizens for a time.

Mechanics should encourage characters to approach things sideways rather than head-on, come up with clever uses for their abilities, and work together. Nothing ever comes without a price and very little is completely straightforward, but make sure the price *creates* stories and drama rather than shutting them down or punishing players for using the power or system. Awarding Beats to players for deliberately getting their characters in trouble is a time-honored **CofD** technique, so feel free to use it liberally.

For guidelines on writing new kiths, Mantles, and Contracts, see Chapter Seven in the **Changeling 2e** core. For guidelines on designing new tokens, see Chapter Four in **Oak, Ash, and Thorn**.

Beast: The Primordial

Themes and Inspirations

Beast: The Primordial is inspired by classic mythological tales of monsters. Like other **Chronicles of Darkness** lines, it has no metaplot. Beasts have no soul, but an endless and yawning hunger, yoked into the primordial nightmares of humanity.

Beast's *external* and *internal horror* is highly similar; a Beast is a villain of the tale, the creature in the dark, the enemy of the righteous. Externally, they face antagonism from Heroes and from the fears they evoke in others, embracing their metaphorical role of lesson as they embrace the literal role of monster. Internally, they struggle in finding purpose in the face of their animalistic Hunger, justifying their actions as imparting valuable lessons or as necessities to maintain family. Uniquely, this emphasis on family means that Beasts regard the other denizens of the **Chronicles of Darkness** as kin to varying degrees. Several Beast powers and themes revolve around this conceit. **Beast** is, in many ways, an ideal crossover game; a single one of the Children may lend their themes and powers to any other **Chronicles** line, providing an element of outside context, a different set of supernatural powers, and thematic reinforcement via acting as a foil.

Beast has a degree of transgressive appeal to it; it is ambiguous as to whether the Children were ever properly human, in that the Devouring is a seamless match to a soul. Despite the lack of overt transformations, **Beast** lends itself to games of emotional and psychological manipulation, with visceral visual horror and lurid descriptions within Nightmares.

Beast has only one edition, fully compatible with the **God-Machine** rules set and any **Chronicles of Darkness** games that have been updated to second edition rules.

Beast's core themes and setting revolve around acceptance of innate inhumanity and the contrast with the humans around the monster. Some suggested media inspirations include: Bill Willingham's *Fables* (comics); *Beowulf* (classics); *Beauty & the Beast* (any classic or Disney version); *Feast* (filk); *Being Human* (television), *Nightbreed* (film); and Alan Moore's run on *Swamp Thing* (comics).

A Beast I Am, A Beast I've Become (Beast: The Primordial)

Bound by shared hunger and the ties of family, monsters attempt to find meaning in their avarice and forge a permanent legend within the mind of humanity.

Tone: The border art for **Beast** is of a toothed maw. Hunger permeates the book, a base need without meaning that Beasts search for. Bereft of innate meaning, the Children must create their own. This Hunger and the accompanying Horrors are ancient, coloring the dreams and nightmares of humanity stretching back into antiquity. Unlike vampires, who are also partially defined by hunger and fear but also by adoption of a specific temporal culture, the Children are timeless.

Beasts typically work towards the Inheritance, the full realization of their legendary self. Each Beast represents a different type of primeval fear, with Heroes representing a corresponding fear of the self and the capacity for monstrosity within. This manifests slightly differently than the horror of other **Chronicles** lines, and crosses over into stark terror at moments. Beasts have to feed, after all.

Themes: No neat little boxes; you don't choose your family; to thine own self be true; the world is a weird and dark one; villain is a matter of perspective; kinship is easy to find if you look, no matter how strange you are.

Setting Advice: Beasts are solitary, though the core book provides guidance for playing in a family group of them. They rest within their Lairs and orient themselves around the Apex of their area in the mundane world, whether it is one of the Children or not.

Beast games typically treat one or more of the other **Chronicles** lines with some degree of prominence (save perhaps **Hunter**, but then again Heroes might work alongside those who keep the Vigil), so a working knowledge of those lines and a written-in degree of interoperability is recommended.

Thus, anchoring along the themes of the secondary game is recommended. Beasts are singularly threatened by Heroes, but anyone the woods are lovely, dark, and deep, and may hide any manner of monster.

Game Design Advice: As the core book suggests, don't get overly concerned about game balance when designing Horrors, but be focused around the needs of crossover. Beasts should be able to fill gaps that their kin cannot, but this diversity shouldn't be an immediate win for other games, or something that short-circuits conflict and drama in the name of expediency.

HUNTER: THE VIGIL

Themes and Inspirations

Hunter: the Vigil expands upon the "blue book" mortal characters, meant to interact with and co-exist alongside the different creatures within the **Chronicles of Darkness** universe — some of which are potential protagonists of other gamelines. Hunters organize on three levels, called Tiers: hunter cells (small groups working more or less alone), regional compacts (groups of hunters who have a presence within the region and may be able to expand outwards, providing support to individual cells), and the national- or global-level conspiracies. Compacts provide resources and support to members who hew to their agenda, whereas conspiracies provide Endowments — supernatural powers or high-tech tools that level the playing field when you're hunting monsters. Hunters choose to adopt the *Vigil*, an alternative code of morality that slowly robs the bearer of their humanity, in order to properly hunt the night. Like other **Chronicles of Darkness** lines, it has no metaplot.

Externally, **Hunter** gives us *visceral horror*. Hunters are driven by urges bordering on the inhuman to take vengeance upon the creatures in the darkness, and this vengeance is rarely clean and neat. Bullet jackets rattle upon the ground, cordite wafts through the air, and all manner of viscera decorates the walls of a hunter's city.

Internally, it gives us *inhuman horror*. Hunters are forced into immoral actions, to associate with those they find distasteful or to goals beyond themselves, or to alter their bodies and tactics with abilities beyond the norm. Some hunters may fear that they're more monstrous than those they hunt. They may be right.

Hunter has two editions. The first edition supplement **Mortal Remains** contains rules that "patch" the game to be fully compatible with the **God-Machine** rules set and any **Chronicles of Darkness** games that have been updated to second edition rules. Mortal Remains contains information on hunting Sin-Eaters, changelings, Prometheans, mummies, and demons, while **Tooth and Nail** covers the hunting of Beasts.

Hunter's core themes and setting revolve around a feeling of the underdog taking on the darkness. Some suggested media inspirations include: *Supernatural* (television); *The X-Files* (television); *The Walking Dead* (comic and television); *Silent Hill* (video game); Hellblazer (comics); and *Children of Men* (movie).

A Candle in the Darkness (Hunter: The Vigil)

As long as monsters prowl the darkness, brave and desperate mortals carry the light to them.

Tone: The cynicism that pervades the Chronicles of Darkness is still present in Hunter, but lessened slightly. The prevailing mood of the game is visceral horror and mystery: these two elements work in tandem to drive hunters towards the Vigil.

You are outnumbered, but not alone. Hunters find others to carry the Vigil with them, to step outside the protective ring of torches and hunt those in the darkness. But not everyone gets along well, and hunters find that the obsession needed to successfully hunt doesn't make for a faithful companion. Many hunter cells fall to internecine squabbling, or worse, become cancer cells — hunter groups infiltrated by the very beings that they hunt.

Themes: The lights in the shadows; the power and fragility of humanity; the inhumanity of the hunt.

Setting Advice: Players should decide what Tier their chronicle functions at, and plan accordingly.

Hunter assumes familiarity with the wider Chronicles of Darkness, but likewise assumes that hunters themselves do not fully understand the beings they hunt. Vampires may not work the same way as the Kindred of **Vampire: the Requiem**, nor might will-workers be the same mages found in **Mage: the Awakening**.

Consequently, paranoia infects many hunter groups. Hunter cells are fairly free, but are limited in resources and generally restricted to one binding desire — keeping the Vigil, nothing more and nothing less. Compacts, by contrast, have resources and structure, but require the

hunters to buy into a specific philosophy or raison d'être. Conspiracies have the greatest number of resources, including Endowments, but require the hunters to give up their freedom and mortal lives almost fully.

Game Design Advice: Don't assume or design creatures that work the same way they do in other **Chronicles of Darkness** games; not only will this throw off the characters, it'll throw off players who assume they know what they're dealing with. Instead, keep your aesthetic locked to **Hunter**, and don't allow for crossover (save, perhaps, Banishers from **Mage** or Heroes from **Beast**).

Hunter compacts typically grant specialties with the first dot of Status, an extra Ability dot with the third dot of Status, and a two- to three-dot Merit with the fifth dot of Status. However, other compacts might give experience breaks on certain Merits, or even provide alternate benefits. Conspiracies should have Endowments, typically purchased as Merits themselves. When designing Endowments, decide whether they're groups of separate powers (like Benediction or Castigation), separate Merits (like Advanced Armory), or grant benefits that ascend with dots (like some of the powers wielded by the conspiracies in **Mortal Remains**).

STORYTELLERS VAULT
WHITE WOLF
Chronicles of Darkness